

WS-15J

July 3, 2002

Robert J. Whiting  
Chief, Regulatory Branch  
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers  
St. Paul District  
St. Paul, MN 55101-1638

RE: 94-01298-IP-DLB  
Cumulative Impacts/Crandon Mine EIS

Dear Mr. Whiting:

You have asked for assistance from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in identifying planned, proposed and/or permitted projects or actions that could cause cumulative impacts when considered with the Nicolet Minerals Company's proposed Crandon Mine project. Your request was dated May 28, 2002 and received on June 13, 2002.

I forwarded your request to various programs within the Regional Office of EPA and asked that they provide me with any projects that are current, planned or have occurred in the recent past that may combine with impacts of the proposed mine to create impacts of greater or lesser extent than caused by the mine project on its own. Most programs do not have any past, present or proposed projects in the Crandon Mine project area, but the Office of Superfund noted that though they do not have any Superfund sites in the immediate project area, there are several closer to Green Bay. One of these projects is the Fox River Superfund Site in Brown County, WI. Though outside of the projected Crandon Mine impact area, the Fox River Superfund site is noteworthy because of its impact to a major river system in upper Wisconsin and impact to a neighboring Tribe, the Oneida Nation. (The Fox River site can be compared and combined with potential impacts to the Wolf River and impacts to neighboring tribes, Sokaogon Chippewa and Menominee Tribes).

Another concern was first brought up by the Menominee Tribe in correspondence with the U.S. Department of Agriculture - Forest Service in a letter dated January 12, 1996. The Tribe was concerned about other exploratory drilling in the Crandon Mine project area that may also result in mining permits being sought. Though other mine projects would have to go through the same permit procedures as the Crandon Mine project is now facing, it would seem reasonable to assume that if the Crandon Mine is permitted, future mine projects in Wisconsin may be some

what easier to get permitted since NMC would have “paved” the way. The COE needs to determine the status of other potential mining projects within northern Wisconsin and include any “foreseeable” cumulative impacts these projects may have with the Crandon Mine project.

Also, as a cumulative impact evaluation for the Crandon Mine EIS, the COE needs to consider other groundwater uses within the project area, including but not limited to commercial, industrial, residential and agricultural uses. Drawdown from these uses may increase the overall impact caused by drawdown from the mine; i.e., irrigation for agricultural uses during the summer months plus drawdown caused by the mine may cause more severe impacts than either one on its own. Similarly, the COE needs to consider other major or minor changes to the landscape in the project area as these changes may combine with the impacts caused by the mine project to increase the overall impact to area waters. For example, if forested areas are slated for cutting, or if a large apartment complex is to be built within the watershed, changes in surface water runoff patterns may further impact receiving waters and combine with impacts caused by the mine. EPA’s HSPF model, once completed, may be able to help evaluate both of these cumulative impact scenarios (depending whether adequate information is provided, such as capture zone delineation for the additional drawdown source(s)).

In addition to the comments above, the COE must evaluate the cumulative nature of the impacts to the Tribal populations with regard to environmental justice concerns. Cultural issues are one aspect of potential impacts to the Tribal populations within the project impact area, as are economic impacts, social impacts, and environmental impacts. The COE needs to add these impacts together along with environmental justice issues, to determine an overall cumulative impact to the Tribal people. This evaluation will need to look at all the impacts from the mine (including impacts on the Tribes such as financial, social and cultural due to fighting the mine over the last 20 years) and impacts anticipated to be caused by related and unrelated projects/activities within the proposed Crandon Mine Project Area.

EPA reserves the right to provide additional comments regarding cumulative impacts when the associated draft chapter(s) relating to cumulative impacts is(are) available for review.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide you with information relating to potential cumulative impacts relating to the Crandon Mine project. If you have any questions on the above, please give me a call at 312-886-7252.

Sincerely,

Daniel J. Cozza, Crandon Mine Project Manager  
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

cc:

Jon Ahlness, COE

Gordon Reid, NMC

Doug Cox, Menominee

Ken Fish, Menominee

Roman Ferdinand, Mole Lake

Larry Lapachin, FCP

John Coleman, GLIFWC

Ann McCammon Soltis, GLIFWC

Melissa Devetter, WDNR

Mary Manydeeds, BIA

John Clancy, Godfrey and Kahn/FCP

Joel Trick, USFWS